

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Bun Kobayashi Yoshimori

*"Everyone got along well. Everyone helped one another. We became so friendly with our long-standing neighbors next door that they would even invite us over to have chagayu and a few pickled vegetables with them. Sometimes I'd go over and sometimes she'd come over. I couldn't work because I had to watch the children. There were many Filipinos in the next camp so I'd go over there to get their laundry."*

Bun Kobayashi Yoshimori, the fourth child of six, was born on June 29, 1898. Her parents were farmers in Hiroshima-ken, Japan. She helped on the farm, learned sewing and weaving, and attended six years of school.

In 1917, she arrived in the Islands to be the wife of Ryoji Yoshimori. She arrived aboard the Siberia-Mar which docked in Honolulu; from Honolulu she boarded the Kinau bound for Ahukini, Kaua'i.

For four years, the Yoshimoris lived in Puhi. Later, they moved to New Mill Camp in Kōloa. Ryoji did plantation field work and tended Waitā Reservoir. He retired in 1965. Bun did field work for a brief time, cared for their six children, and took in laundry work.

Now widowed, Bun still resides in Kōloa. She is active in senior citizens' activities.

Tape No. 15-23-1-87 TR

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Bun Kobayashi Yoshimori (BY)

April 28, 1987

Kōloa, Kaua'i

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

[Note: Interview conducted in Japanese. Translation done by Judith Yamauchi.]

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Bun Yoshimori at her home in Kōloa, Kaua'i on April 28, 1987. The interviewer is Michi Kodama-Nishimoto. The interview was conducted in Japanese.

What was your mother's name?

BY: On my side or on the Yoshimori side?

MK: On your side.

BT: Oh, I've forgotten my mother's name.

MK: And your father's name?

BY: His name was Tomoshiro. Oh yes, my mother's name was Tami now that I think of it. Kobayashi Tomoshiro and my mother's name was Kobayashi Tami.

MK: When were you born?

BY: In the thirty-first year of Meiji [1898] on June 29.

MK: Where were you born?

BY: In Hiroshima-ken, Futami-gun, Kisa-machi, Shikiji.

MK: How many were in your family?

BY: There were ten in our family. Eight children, but two died so six were left.

MK: What number child were you?

BY: I was the third daughter.

MK: What sort of life did you have in those days?

BY: After all, we were farmers, so it wasn't very luxurious. There were a lot of children and my father didn't carry on the family name since he had an older brother. On top of that, he married a woman of his own choice and set up his own household in which he had eight children. My oldest sister married early at nineteen and went with her husband to work in Hawai'i. My older brother-in-law must have been twenty-five or so and they both decided to go to Hawai'i. My father said, "If you're going to Hawai'i, I'll let you have this daughter." Then they seriously decided to go to Hawai'i. At the time my sister and this man came to Hawai'i, I must have been about seven years old.

NK: In comparison with your neighbors, how did your family life rate?

BY: It was about average. We weren't that bad off.

MK: What sorts of things did you raise on your farm?

BY: Things like rice and in the field we planted millet; just about everything we ate, we raised in our fields and paddies.

MK: Was your land area large or small?

BY: It wasn't too large. I'd say about average. The field was about three tan [about .735 acres] and the paddy about five tan [about 1.23 acres]. But it managed to support us until we left one by one. My oldest sister came to Hawai'i. Mother died young--when she was forty-four--so the second sister looked after us, and my only older brother went off to the war--he was taken by the army.

MK: How old were you when your mother passed away?

BY: I was thirteen.

MK: What sort of house did you live in--your Hiroshima house?

BY: An average house. A farmhouse on a farm. I wanted to go to school, but my father went out to some other business and with my mother passing away early and being a burden on my older sister, I couldn't go to school. I was busy working on the farm and I was made to do everything. I worked very hard and did everything.

MK: When you say farm work, what sort of work was it--in those days?

BY: There was no machinery in those days. We used oxen and sometimes we would have people come to help and use the oxen to plow the fields. Then we would plant rice during rice season. During wheat season, we would have meetings at which time we would agree to help one another; for example, you send two people to help me and I'll send two to help you, etc. In this way we would work by helping each other. So even if we were few in number, we managed--by helping

each other. So by using oxen--from early in the morning when it was still dark, we would go out to the mountains to cut grass. The grass we cut, we would bring home and cut it and put it where oxen were kept. We had the oxen tread on it; we loaded this trampled grass after it had decayed for use in the paddy. For feeding the oxen, we would cut the wild mountain grass which was very tough. Everyone did this--men, women, children, all of us alike. We really worked hard.

MK: So you worked from early in the morning until . . .

BY: Until late at night. During rice harvest time, we had no time to sleep; once my sister even told us to just squat down for a while until dawn and nap in the shed without taking a bath. We had one night like that, but usually we worked until twelve o'clock, one o'clock, or two o'clock in the morning. By the time we went to take a bath, the water would be cold; we would restart the fire to reheat the water a little and bathe and go to sleep. When we took this quick bath, we'd have to start again early in the morning.

MK: Was this work which continued throughout the year?

BY: The work changed depending on the time of year. When it was grass cutting time, we'd get up early. During the winter we couldn't cut grass because it was cold. The grass we cut during the summer, we dried it to make hoshigasa and later fed it to the oxen. We stored it in the overhead eaves and took down portions at a time to feed it together with rice straw to the oxen. So during the summer, we rushed to pile up the dried grass to feed the oxen during the winter. We all pressed hard.

MK: And was there women's work to do at home?

BY: Yes, there was. During rice harvest season, as I mentioned before, we had to come home to sleep. There was a separate shed where we kept the oxen where there was plenty of work to do such as threshing or milling rice, etc., which we could do right there since the machinery was there. During the winter, we stayed in the kotatsu to do handiwork such as sewing clothes.

MK: During those days did you do any weaving?

BY: I certainly did! Since I didn't think I would come to a place like this, my sister always said that women should know how to do everyday things and she taught me very strictly how to do work. In our weaving, we had to arrange the pattern and thread the yarn two at a time through the loom between the bars. We were trained to be able to do things ourselves. When I married into the Yoshimori family, my mother-in-law said to me, "You've already mended and taken care of our sewing, so there's no work left for you. Do you know how to do weaving?" I answered that I sure can do weaving. Then she asked me if that meant I knew how to arrange the pattern. I told her I could. She was surprised and told me she could ask me



to do some weaving, although she never went that far. In the old days, the older people would check to find out what a person could do. So I had to learn weaving, sewing, and all such things. Do you know what soba is? Of course, after coming here, I didn't need to know such things. But in Japan unless you learn all the chores, you will suffer after you get married. We were made to learn everything. So I know about everything.

MK: What sort of Japanese foods did you cook in those days? For example, for dinner and lunch.

BY: Often, in Japan we made namasu, since we had eggplants and cucumbers, and usually had miso soup for breakfast and dinner. That is, we made miso soup. We were taught all the necessities before we left home. Since they worried that I might suffer after I left home. My older sister had to marry early since we lost our mother early. My oldest sister had already married and come to Hawai'i and wasn't with us anymore, so my next oldest sister took care of us. We were really made to do severe things. As a result, we didn't suffer very much after we came here.

MK: How many years did you attend school?

BY: Up to the sixth grade. It used to be until the fourth grade. And then it was raised by two grades to the sixth grade. So I was finally allowed to go until the sixth grade. After that I worked hard on the farm.

MK: What about your younger brothers and sisters? Did you carry them on your back to go to school?

BY: No, I didn't have to go so far as to carry them.

MK: What sorts of things did you learn in school in those days?

BY: The usual things. It wasn't a girls' school, but just an elementary school.

MK: Compared with the other girls, did the other girls also go to school until about the sixth grade?

BY: Yes, we all went together.

MK: And did you have plans as to what you wanted to do when you grew up?

BY: No, it was not our place to think about things like that. We were only made to do farm work, and when we became adults people would come from here and there to ask for our hands in marriage. People would come over and say that they understand there are daughters here and could they look us over--that is, people who are looking for someone. I was nineteen and the younger sister was seventeen. My father said, there are two of us so take your choice. When they came to look us over, we would first serve them tea and offer

cigarettes to those who smoked. It was a matter of etiquette to give them tea and cigarettes. The two of us would be lined up together; and they said that both of us were fine, but since it's more customary for the older one to be taken first, they will choose me. That's how I came to marry into the Yoshimori family.

MK: Then was that a matchmaker from the Yoshimori family?

BY: Yes. It was the mother of the Yoshimori family. The mother's older sister lived near us and she had told them that we had some nice daughters here so the two of them, the mother and her older sister, came to look us over.

MK: At the time were you aware that they had come to look you over?

BY: No, I didn't. I had gone to thresh wheat--wheat threshing is the most disliked work on a farm because it's itchy to the body. That's where I had gone. At that time, they [the Yoshimoris] had come to ask to look us over, and they told us to come home, so we hurried home to wash our faces and clean up a bit and change clothes. Then we served some tea and that was about it. We were hurried because we lived on a farm. They told us the [Yoshimoris] said that we must not be afraid of work if we were willing to go out to thresh wheat--because everyone hated threshing wheat. They told me I had to go to return the work favor so that's what I went for. We couldn't oppose our parents. And no matter how unpleasant the work, since the others had come to help us, we had to go help them in return. I was used for this purpose many times. I was just about the right age for this. Since my sister was a little young for this at seventeen, I was the main person used for this work.

MK: Did the Yoshimoris choose you?

BY: The mother and her older sister. Since the mother was on the Yoshimori side, they were all Haka-son; I am Kisa-son--Kisa-village. And it was the older sister who had brought her over. Something like that.

MK: What did you think about marrying into their family?

BY: Well, they had all gone off to Hawai'i and earned a lot of money and returned so I thought I'd go off and get my share too. Although I didn't know what sort of person I'd be marrying, I thought I'd give it a try. They had brought over a snapshot.

MK: What did you think after seeing the photo?

BY: He [Ryoji Yoshimori] was a physically well-built, dignified-looking person, so I thought he would be all right. He was just five years older, so it was just right. After coming to Hawai'i, at the immigration station where the men and girls met for the first time. . . . The girls had come with nice photos of their men--some men had sent photos of themselves when they were much younger--these

girls would cry and cry that it was the wrong person. There were cases like that. You'd see old men going out with young girls. It was inevitable that such couples would separate when they did such unreasonable things. In my case, there was just five years difference in age, and he was well-built and at the peak of his health when he came.

MK: When did your husband come to Hawai'i?

BY: I think it was in the forty-second year of Meiji [1909]. I had it written down over there . . .

MK: That's okay. We can check it later. Had he come over before you?

BY: Yes, he came over earlier.

MK: Why did he come to Hawai'i?

BY: In his case, both his father and uncle had come to work in Hawai'i as well as his older brother. So these three had already come ahead of him. When he was sixteen, right after graduating from high school, he came over. He was physically fit so he worked hard and was praised by everyone and solicited by everyone to work for them. He was hired to go to Lawa'i to dig ditches, etc., and he worked so hard that sometimes they would give him a little extra money. When he even got five cents extra, he would be so happy since it was the old days. He was an earnest and faithful person at the beginning.

MK: Did your husband also come from a farm in Japan?

BY: Yes, he came from a farming family.

MK: Which child was he?

BY: The second.

MK: What sort of feelings did you have when you came to Hawai'i?

BY: Me? Why, I was determined to come and work hard and save a lot of money. Since it was farm work, I was confident I could do it. After graduating from school, I had done my share of farm work so this part didn't worry me a bit. But after arriving, I thought I should never have come to such a place. I even cried. After arriving, for one week I sewed our clothes--shirts, trousers--actually they were hakama--and teue and tabis. I sewed our clothes for one week. Our friend came over to teach me, so I sewed it on a treadle machine.

Then this woman friend said, "Oh my, are you sure this is the first time you've used a treadle machine?"

I answered that it wasn't my first time, but that my older sister who had returned from Hawai'i had taught me a little.

She said, "I thought so. An ordinary person wouldn't be able to use the machine so well, so I thought you must have used it before."

In the old days we used to move the treadle with our feet, you know. We didn't have the motor-type like we have today, but we had to work it with our feet. When a beginner first tries to use the treadle, his back and forth motion causes the belt to slip so she knew I wasn't a beginner. For the first week after I arrived, I had to prepare by sewing tabis and kimonos and things. After that we went out to work.

MK: I'd like to backtrack a little and ask you a few questions about your trip to Hawai'i [in 1917]. How much did you have to pay for your trip?

BY: Do you mean money? He sent it from here to send for me. My husband was a persevering man so he didn't have to borrow any money to send for me, and he sent me the money and I came, but the usual person had to resort to tanomoshi or borrow travel fare to send for someone. My husband had saved for my trip. I think it was about \$600 or just a little over that.

MK: After the money was set, what sort of preparation did you have before coming to Hawai'i? What sorts of formal procedures did you have to go through?

BY: A request that I could come was sent saying that I could make the trip. I had to take this paper around to various public offices in Japan to formalize it and then I came. Since I was a farm girl, my mother and father--my real mother had died, so it was my stepmother--the two of them took me to Kobe. It was from Kobe that I boarded the ship.

MK: I understand that you had to wait for twenty-one days in Kobe.

BY: Yes, at that time, many people forced their way to come to Hawai'i. So it was difficult to get a spot on board. My parents stayed with me for two days in Kobe, but they left and I was so lonely. But there were many people staying in the inns and playing and every evening we went to worship at a shrine named Nanko-san. Every night people would go to pray that they will draw a low number in the lottery so they could board the ship early. They didn't have anything else to do. My number was one which almost didn't let me board. In order to board, they took into consideration your lot number, your eyesight, whether or not you had intestinal worms, etc. Even if everyone had come after having gone through treatment, if you didn't pass these tests here you couldn't leave.

MK: Was it usual to wait twenty-one days?

BY: Even worse than my case--there were two girls who were sent for by their parents. They were in different inns, but the older sister left early and younger sister was left behind. The people in the

inn wanted them to go together, and it was quite a while since the older sister had taken her test and left the younger sister behind. I went to take my tests but since there were so many people, I couldn't get on board. But eventually I did get on. The poor younger sister--she depended on me but--I had to leave her behind and felt sorry for her being left behind by her older sister. But eventually she was able to come. Her name was Takaki. That's how we crossed over.

MK: So you finally boarded the ship. What was the name of the ship?

BY: Siberia-maru. It was a large ship.

MK: How was your voyage?

BY: It was great. I was young so I didn't get seasick. On board, I ate and played on deck for about nine days.

MK: What sorts of things did you do during these nine days on board?

BY: Just talked with my friends. I didn't know how to enjoy anything else.

MK: How were the food and sleeping quarters?

BY: Good.

MK: What about the food?

BY: The food was relatively good and sufficient. We were able to eat tasty takuan and there was plenty of food.

MK: Did the ship land at Honolulu?

BY: Yes, it landed at Honolulu. I stayed in the immigration station for six days. Crowds of people had come and they had to let them through in order. They released the returning couples first, that is, couples coming over for the second time. Then the single person coming over for the second time. Then the brides went out. There were so many people, they had to go in succession.

MK: Were there any tests after you arrived in Honolulu?

BY: Yes, there were. There was an academic test and an eye exam and one for intestinal worms. For the academic test, we all sat around a table and they handed out a written paper. Since they asked us just what was written, they told us to do just that. I noticed as I was reading it that it said that if I could read what was written to go ahead and read it. The [examiner] asked if I could understand what was written and I said yes; so they told me I passed. Other people's tests said various things such as "Put your pencil into your pocket or your sleeve," and they were to do as was written. That's how they passed. It was easy for me. All I had to do was

read what was written and do it. But there were those who didn't pass the test--people who hadn't gone to school.

MK: Were you scared when you took this test?

BY: Not at all. There were things written such as "Can you read Chinese characters?" If you said you could, they would list very difficult ones. But it was easy for me. I passed easily.

MK: So you landed in Honolulu and was staying at the immigration station. Was there someone working there by the name of Katsunuma-san?

BY: Yes, there was. He was a substantial fellow, this Japanese man. I ran into his son on my last trip to Las Vegas. He told me I appeared to be elderly so did I know his father who worked at the immigration office. Mr. [Tomizo] Katsunuma was the only Japanese there so I asked if he meant Mr. Katsunuma and he replied that he was Mr. Katsunuma's son. I told him that now that he mentioned it, he looked a lot like his father. There was a girl named Tashima Otsuyu-san who worked there. I was really impressed with her bustling around in her high heels which I had never seen before. Even though she was Japanese, she was strong-minded.

MK: What do you remember about Mr. Katsunuma? Did he say anything to you?

BY: Nothing special. When it was time to eat, a bell rang and we all got into line and if someone cut into a line, he would grab him and send him to the back. If someone tried to go to the front and eat earlier he would grab him by his back and scold him severely.

MK: How many days did you stay at the immigration station?

BY: Six days.

MK: What sorts of feelings did you have while you were there?

BY: I was only wondering when I could get out. If another ship landed more people would come in . . .

MK: After leaving the immigration station, what happened?

BY: My husband had realized that I wouldn't be able to get out in a few days so--his friend had gone to Waipahu so--he had gone to meet his friend in Waipahu. Everyone would peek out from between the wall planks of the immigration station to see if their husbands had come. That's how we all waited. My husband sent in some makisushi to me and went off to visit his friend in Waipahu. They told me that he sent in some sushi for me. Nevertheless, I don't know how many times I peeked out to see if he had come.

MK: What did you think of your husband when you first saw him?



BY: My husband? On the day we were released, the men were all standing in a row opposite us and we girls were all on this side. They told us to look for our husbands since we had all seen their pictures. The men had also seen our photos so they looked over at us. Our eyes met and we recognized each other. I said I was Yoshimori Bun and he said, "Then you must be my wife," and we shook hands. Then he took me out. I recognized him immediately.

MK: Then you didn't have to go through the Izumo shrine ceremony?

BY: No, they didn't have that during my time. Some others told me they got married at the Izumo shrine, but in my case, we just shook hands. I guess it differs with the times. We just shook hands and didn't have any marriage ceremony.

MK: After leaving immigration, where did you go?

BY: The same evening we boarded the ship and came home. The name of the ship was the Kina'u. It traveled between islands. It came over in one night.

MK: Where in Kaua'i?

BY: To Ahukini. In order to land, we were put onto a smaller boat, and a kanaka would yell how many could board. That was frightening to have this huge person board us. At that time, I wondered if this frightening person was one of the natives. That was the first time I saw a kanaka.

MK: So you were a bit frightened?

BY: Yes I was.

MK: Did you bring a lot of baggage?

BY: No, just one suitcase. That and a small cosmetic bag, one of those square ones which was popular in those days. That was all.

MK: After reaching Ahukini, from there . . .

BY: At Ahukini, there was a horse and cart which had come to pick us up. There were no cars. There was a store named Yamaoka which put out the horse and cart. They rented it and came to get us. It was dark by the time we came home to Puhi. It took time by horse and cart since there weren't any cars like we have today. Just as we arrived home, the old man who lived in the room as we did said, "Hey, Yoshimori, did you come home?" My husband said we had and the man apologized that the house was a mess. My husband said that it was all right.

It was dark so he lit a lamp since there was no electricity. And this man smoked and littered up this tiny solitary room which had a mosquito net slung across it. Since he was a man and old and had to

work--it was so dirty there wasn't even room to sit down. So I stood and waited till dawn. My husband said he would have to tell the cook that we were home so I should just rest. I wondered what I should do if I had to live in such a filthy place--a room where two men had lived together. A single mosquito net, which was used to cover the two men as they slept, was left hanging about the place. I took down the mosquito net and straightened up the place and started sweeping. My husband returned and said the cook told us to come and eat since it was dawn.

It was light so I looked outside and all around us were weeds. Our single house was set among wild grass. The other houses were grouped in a row but ours used to be a store. I don't know how many lived there but in the front there were two persons and inside there is one and then there was the two of us and in the next room there was a Korean. Although it was one house, there were only partitions and in one house there were many people in cramped quarters. It was right after I came that they made a kitchen for me in the front. Until then they had none. In order to cook rice, they made a stove and a kitchen--since a woman had come. They came to the plantation to make a stove for me and a sink. Until then they didn't have any pipes. They laid the pipes for us. Previously they had a huge water tank from which they carried the water. They had one or two large tanks for each camp for the people to draw from. We would go there to do the laundry. It was inconvenient. But after I came they installed pipes. For firewood, we would gather wood from the mountains. That's how it was.

MK: What were your thoughts upon coming to such a place?

BY: Well, since coming to Hawai'i was my own doing, I thought I would work hard every day so that I could go back home as soon as possible. But within three months, I became pregnant. If I didn't become pregnant, I could work hard, but since the baby came--I went to work until eight months--until nine months.

MK: What sort of work did you do?

BY: Kālai, cut weeds with the hoe; hanawai irrigate, etc. I didn't have to have to go as far as to hapai ko, carry sugarcane, though.

MK: What sort of work did your husband do?

BY: He was a contract cane farmer. Such a farmer would plant his crop, water and add fertilizer, and the better crop he brought in the more money he'd make. In contract cane farming about three people would share one field.

MK: What sort of place was Puhi?

BY: It was a bit country. You know where the mill is now. On this side was all cane fields. That place is called New Mill but Puhi was one town before that.



MK: Was there any sort of town around Puhi?

BY: Oh no, there was nothing like a town. Outside of Kōloa, near the mill, the plantation hired a Chinese and a Japanese boy to run a store. I was in Puhi for three years after I first came and from there we moved to New Mill where there were more people and a house was available. We moved there when I had one child and was pregnant with another.

MK: Were there only a few Japanese in Puhi?

BY: No, there were many.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: So before you moved to New Mill you had given birth to one child?

BY: Yes. My first son.

MK: Did you use a midwife?

BY: People who had come from Japan all helped so we didn't call a midwife. Because there were many pregnant women when I gave birth, they came to help pull it out and taught me how to cut the umbilical cord. I myself have never done it, but they taught me. They said they would come to help wash during birth. We helped each other and didn't ask a midwife. Everybody who worked helped each other. Everyone was taught. Today they say you'll get infection, etc., etc., and you need a doctor, but in the old days we just cut the cord with our ordinary scissors and we didn't get any infections. We never hired a midwife. After we moved to New Mill, we also had friends help. My last child was delivered by a midwife.

MK: So all the women helped one another?

BY: Yes, we all helped each other with cleaning the soiled things. In the old days we all amiably cooperated and helped. Today we don't have to prepare our children for going off to marry. We were all newcomers so we helped each other.

MK: In Puhi, were there people of other races--Hawaiians or Caucasians, etc.

BY: Yes, there were. Since it was a little in the country, there weren't any Caucasians, but the houses in the Japanese Camp were all lined up in a row in one section and in the back there was a Philippine Camp. A short distance away below there was a Chinese Camp. The Chinese would cook their rice in a huge pot with a cover

on it. They would make their lunch and take it to work. The Japanese cooks would properly make lunches for the Japanese in the morning and enclose them in lunch bags and set them out one by one. The workers would go over and eat breakfast and then take these lunch bags with us to work. It would be late when they finished work so they would first go take a bath and then go to eat where the cooking was done. After I came I started cooking for them.

MK: What sort of cooking did you do in Hawai'i in those days?

BY: When I came it was so poor you could hardly call it cooking. I would do such things as boil black beans or use dried codfish--these days they have them all nicely cut up and packaged--but I'd go buy these huge whole ones in the stores which were thrown into wooden boxes. If I bought a whole one it would be cheaper so that's what I did. I would use these as okazu by grilling it or boiling it. Also such things as salted salmon or iriko. So I would use salted salmon, iriko, or boiled black beans, grilled codfish, etc., in the lunch box.

MK: You mentioned the Chinese and Filipinos before, but how was their relationship with the Japanese?

BY: Well, we didn't get too close to them, but when we started out for work early in the morning when it was still dark, they were the most frightful things for me when I first came here. Everyone was saying the Filipinos and the others seemed wild and frightening. When I got on a train, I was a young newcomer so Filipinos--none of them had wives--would scramble to try to sit down next to me--since I was young. This commotion frightened me.

MK: On the train?

BY: Yes, we went by train to the working place. The train would let us off near the field where each of us worked.

MK: People from the old days often speak to me of the lunas. What was your luna like? What sort of person?

BY: He was a German named Joe--who had a mustache. At the cane field there were two of us girls working. The men had their own work so they went in that direction. I worked with this other woman. Sometimes this woman would be absent and I would be by myself. At that time, the luna came to check to see if I was there and he called out to me. I got scared and hid under the cane. Afterward, I realized that that must have been the luna and I would have to meet him in order to give him my time worked so I appeared. When I waved at him, he asked me if I were working and I said yes. Then he wrote it down in his notebook and went on. But I was the only girl so I was scared. Of course if something happened, I could yell to the other men who were working, but still I was frightened.

MK: How was your verbal communication in those days?

BY: I didn't understand anything. If I showed myself, he [the luna] would recognize me by my face and write it down that I was there.

MK: Then later you moved to New Mill Camp?

BY: Yes, we did.

MK: Because you had a house there . . .

BY: Yes, we had a house. Since it was not just a single [room] but a house, we had rooms in the back for sleeping--about four rooms.

MK: Did the house have water and electricity?

BY: At that time, it had piped water--in Puhi we got plumbing after I came--but we had no electricity. When we got electricity, I was overjoyed. Lights were put into the rooms. I was never so happy in all my life!

MK: Was it free?

BY: Yes, the electricity was free.

MK: What sort of people lived in New Mill Camp?

BY: Virtually all Japanese.

MK: Mainly from Hiroshima-ken or Yamaguchi-ken or Kumamoto-ken?

BY: They were all mixed together.

MK: What was the relationship between people from the various kens?

BY: Everyone got along well. Everyone helped one another. We became so friendly with our long-standing neighbors next door that they would even invite us over to have chagayu and a few pickled vegetables with them. Sometimes I'd go over and sometimes she'd come over. I couldn't work because I had to watch the children. There were many Filipinos in the next camp so I'd go over there to get their laundry. If I did the laundry for ten people--at the beginning I got \$1.50 per month [per person].

MK: At that time were there other camps besides New Mill Camp?

BY: As I just mentioned, around the mill with the train tracks being the borderline, there was a Filipino Camp on the side. It's old now, but they were all new homes then. There were a lot of Filipinos there. They didn't have any wives so I used to go there to get all their laundry.

MK: What did you charge for one piece of laundry?

BY: It wasn't by the piece. I got \$1.50 per month. Then I raised it by

a quarter. And for those who carried cane on their shoulders, I had to charge \$2.50 since they changed their clothes often because they got dirty. So I got \$2.50 from them. At the beginning I received \$1.50 per month for their laundry.

MK: And this involved doing the washing and the ironing?

BY: I would stiffly starch and neatly iron everything. These days people wear patterned aloha shirts, but in the old days, they'd wear these long-sleeved, white shirts. As for the starch, I'd try not to use the powder so it would iron nicely. I used to use Chinese starch which was better and starched the whites separately so they would look better after ironing. But for denim-type working clothes, I couldn't use such expensive starch and mixed in powder--it may not seem expensive now, but in those days when I just arrived. . . . I'd put a lot of powder in to make the starch; it was difficult to iron since I used so much powder. I'd starch twice. I'd make a separate starch for the whites.

MK: Would you cook it to make it white?

BY: Yes, in an empty can. And I'd have to gather the wood for it. We'd also get some from the plantation--a cord would be brought over by a cart pulled by horse--not motorized like they have today. One cartful or one cord cost about \$1.50 or \$2.00. They would drop it off and we would chop it and use it for cooking and heating. This wood had to be ordered and the cost would be deducted from our pay by the plantation office. So we'd buy our firewood and be charged by the cord.

MK: Besides the Filipino Camp, was there a Portuguese Camp?

BY: Yes, there was but I never went there. The Portuguese lunas and big shots lived there.

MK: So you got the firewood from the plantation?

BY: Yes, when we had to we did, but to avoid having to buy it, whenever we had free time we would go to gather it which meant more money for us since we wouldn't have to buy it. We all endured hardships.

MK: Where did you buy your food and clothes and necessities?

BY: There was a store which would take our orders and deliver them to us by horse and cart.

MK: Was that from a Isoda-san?

BY: Isoda-san and Ota-san. Also Shimabukuro-san's store was a cooperative. So there were those of Isoda-san, Ota-san, the [Kōloa] Plantation, and the Rego Store run by a Caucasian. The Rego Store and the [Kōloa] Plantation Store used to negotiate to take our orders and we would place our orders with them.

MK: So in the morning they would come to take your orders and . . .

BY: They would deliver them by the time work was over.

MK: Did you pay by having it deducted from your pay?

BY: No, they would bring a bill which we would pay.

MK: There are various stores in Kōloa now but what sorts of stores did they have here in the old days?

BY: In Kōloa town if you go up from here, on the corner there was a large place called Kaua'i Motors where they sold cars and vehicles. That house has crumbled and now they are selling gasoline. On that corner there used to be a large house called Kaua'i Motors. Next to that there was a Chinese store [Johnny Awa Store]. From there, there was Yamamoto Store, next to the river, which was the oldest one. In the end it was the Yamamoto Store, but when we first came--someone else ran it. After that there was the Tanaka Store where they sold fish. Nearby there was also a Japanese doctor [Dr. Yoshizawa]. Next to that there was the old Chang Fook Store. After that there is the Tao Store just on this side of where you leave New Mill. On this side as you proceed upward, there is the Isonaga Store, and a clock store [run by a Mr. Iwai]--what was the name of that store now?--I can't remember now. There was a hotel run by--it slipped my mind who ran it. [Yamaka operated a hotel.] Then there was the Rego Store which was a big store. There was a small post office there too--during the war when there were soldiers here--now there is a new one.

MK: Was there a movie theater, also?

BY: There was a movie theater although it burned [in 1936]. About the time we bought our house and came here, there were about two movies a week. It was quite a walk to go there so we would tell people we were going to the movies and start out when it was still light.

MK: Were there Japanese movies then?

BY: Yes, there were.

MK: Did they use benshi?

BY: Yes, there were narrators. There was the narrator, [Kamesuke] Nakahama.

MK: Did shibai come here?

BY: Yes, they did. In the back behind the sidewalk--you know where those Caucasians are selling things--just inside there, there was a Japanese hall of Tao-san. Was it Tao-san? It was all torn down and Shinagawa Camp was put in its place. There were six or seven two-bedroom houses there in Shinagawa Camp. That was built by

tearing down the large Japanese hall. The old hall was next to the Japanese[-language] school. There were two halls, you know.

MK: Did you come out to Kōloa town every day?

BY: Oh no. Not unless we had business here. Since I had the children, I would have to push them or carry them or pull them along. I certainly couldn't go out unless I had some business. Not unless I had some transportation. There weren't many people who had cars. Once in a while if someone from the store came out to take our order and I had some business in town, I would catch a ride on his cart and do some shopping and come home. When you have small children you can't go out. But if there was a shibai or naniwa-bushi or something, it was a big thing carrying them or pulling them along, carrying diaper bags etc. But since there wasn't any other form of entertainment, we would all ask one another and go.

MK: Did the children go to Japanese-language school?

BY: Yes, they did.

MK: Which Japanese-language school?

BY: There was a Japanese-language school next to the Shin-shu Buddhist church. That's where I sent them.

MK: Was that a Hongwanji sect?

BY: The Japanese-language school which was next to the Hongwanji Temple, had a Hongwanji priest and a Jōdō-shu priest, both acting as the teachers. When I came I think it was Naito-sensei and the Jōdō-shu priest was Hino-sensei who taught the children. In addition there was a boy who had come from Japan named Takemura or Takamura who taught. There weren't any bona fide teachers. There was a teacher from Kekaha who was teaching. Who is that person who is doing travel tours now? Furuya-sensei. Furuya-sensei used to be the principal. People met and decided to ask him to come to be principal. Then things could be settled as opposed to when there were only priests. So with Takamura there were about three but, without a principal, nothing could be settled, so they had Furuya-sensei come to be principal.

MK: Did this Japanese-language school have such things as undō-kai?

BY: Yes, it did. There wasn't any other diversion so they enthusiastically had undō-kais. Also gakugei-kai.

MK: Was there anything else?

BY: No, just gakugei-kai and undō-kai.

MK: Do you belong to the Jōdō-shu?



BY: No, I was neither Jōdō-shu nor Shin-shu, but when I came the people from Shin-shu would solicit me and the people from Jōdō-shu side would pull me but since they were all friends it caused a problem. Ultimately, because the children were sickly, I joined the Odai sect of Shingon-shu, since there were many people helped by Shingon-shu. Then I wouldn't feel beholden to either side. So I am the only one in the Odai sect.

MK: In the Odai sect do you celebrate Buddhist mass?

BY: Yes, we do. Since there used to be many Odai-san believers, even though the hall was small, every month we would have services for people who would come to worship. Even today, there is a temple for Odai-san of Shingon-shu where every month there is a mass. If possible we would have the Shingon-shu priest come from Waimea; so every month we would have a service. There are times when we can't have one if the number of helpers is small, because having a service party involves setting out food such as mazegohan, nishime, boiled black beans, namasu, etc. But every month we used to do this. These days unless men from the Jōdō-shu come to help me, I can't do it. This is because I am the only one in the Shingon-shu. I check to see whether or not the Jōdō-shu are available, and if they aren't I consult with everyone to see if we should have an Odai-san service. Then the people would offer to help. With the help of four or five people, a reasonable mass can be held. So with help, if possible, every month I do it, but there are months when I can't when the Jōdō-shu priest is not available. Except for these times, it is held every month. I've been with the Odai-san for a long time. That's why I've been able to live so long.

MK: So your children went to the Japanese-language school as well as the Kōloa school, didn't they?

BY: Yes, they did.

MK: Did you have just three children or four?

BY: There are six. They all went to Japanese-language school. But after the war, the youngest, although he was doing well, stopped in the second grade, so he forgot it.

MK: For English school, they went to Kōloa School and after that . . .

BY: After that it was high school and they had to go to Līhu'e.

MK: In those days, as a mother, what sort of hopes did you have for your children?

BY: For the children, if possible I wanted them to go to school, but because of the conditions at home, they couldn't go to school. Before long the war [World War II] broke out and they were taken by the army. After they got out of the army. . . . The oldest didn't go into the army but stayed home to help--but the other two went to

war, but they all came home safely.

MK: What sort of work did your husband do throughout?

BY: You know that large lake, Waitā. He used to mālama it. In the beginning, as I said before, he did contract work in cane and after he was taken in by the plantation, he did mulching whereby after you guide water in the field and you plant the sugar seedling and take care of it--you have to be bright to be able to do it--mulching. He was made to do mulching. You had to plan it so the water gets diverted just as you want it. You have to really use your head. He did mulching for quite a while. He was physically strong so he also did fertilizer spreading. He would load fertilizer on the mule and distribute it around--also spread fertilizer. He did work he liked to do. What he did the longest was at Waitā. He was old by that time. After they didn't need help at Waitā anymore, he worked at the mill for a while--at the place where they wash the cane along a conveyor. He was already old by then--just before his pension. Shortly after that he retired.

MK: When did he retire?

BY: He received his [pension] from sixty-two--when he was sixty-two years old.

(Voice from aside.)

MK: From sixty-five.

BY: Not sixty-two. He could have gotten it from sixty-two, but he extended it to sixty-five.

MK: Before he retired, the union came in.

BY: Yes, as a result, there was a long strike [i.e., the "Aloha" strike of 1958 which lasted 128 days]. He retired just about the time of that long strike. The two of us went to Japan and stayed there for quite a while.

MK: What was your life like after the union [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] came in?

BY: We somehow managed. The union forced a strike and long work layoff. I used to serve coffee to the union people. But during that long strike, I was in Japan.

MK: About when did you come here [near Kōloa town]?

BY: Do you mean here? It's been over thirty years since we came here. From New Mill. It's probably been thirty-one or thirty-two years.

MK: Why did you move?



BY: Because we built our own home here. Before that we didn't have our own homes. Nobody had their own homes. Everyone lived in plantation-owned houses. There weren't any people who had built their own homes in those days. In order to build one's own home, it required very hard-earned money, but fortunately in our case we were able to do it, so we came here to build it.

MK: Your husband and you and your sons?

BY: Yes.

MK: After your long residency in Kōloa, what do you think has changed the most?

BY: As I mentioned before, when I first came, there was no piped water or electricity, and having these put in were my greatest satisfaction. In order to use water, we had to haul it by bucket. . . . Water is so important. I was happy about that and then after moving to New Mill, I was the happiest about having electricity installed. For cooking we used electricity after we came here. But before this we used kerosene stoves. Before that we used coal like that used on trains for cooking. There would be a metal plate placed over it and a hole leading out. We'd place a kettle over that and start the coal fire under this. That's how we'd cook. The plantation used to provide this coal to us free. It's just having to haul it home--we'd try to pick out nice pieces--it was so heavy. After that we bought a coal and oil stove--they have tall ones and short ones--cooking with this was much easier.

MK: After having lived in Hawai'i this long, what do you think?

BY: Now, I think it was good since I am happy. There were many hardships--very hard times. But somehow we endured them and now I have everything. I don't lack anything. My husband passed away, but I received the pension my husband left me--my portion. With that I have spending money. If I were to want to go to Honolulu, I don't have to ask anyone for spending money, since I have my own money. I merely tell them I'm going to Honolulu. I am so happy now. I was a little depressed when my husband died, but that couldn't be helped since he was old and I couldn't go with him. But here in Kōloa, the two younger ones are kind to me--there's the three of us here. At one time we had so many people--we even have five [bedrooms].

MK: It certainly is a large house.

BY: Everyone said it looked like we were building a hotel, but we had to since we had so many people. But they went into the army, came home and got married, and got their own homes--there is even one next door. Everyone has his own house. These days people can easily get their own but in the old days you can't imagine how you had to suffer to get your own house. You had to scrimp and save.

MK: With this, we'll be ending here. You must be tired?

BY: These days I am so truly happy. Every day I am so thankful for being able to enjoy myself this way. In order to prevent my mind from going bad, I play hana[fuda]. If I were to play the useless type of hana where you just play, you don't use your mind, but in yakubana you have to think about what cards to take and use your mind, so it is good for the elderly to keep them from going senile. That's why I go to play. I don't play for money, but if you play like you are, it gets to be fun. I thank God for being allowed to live so long. I will be ninety. I feel so fortunate. Every morning I thank God for this life and ask His blessings for the coming day. Every night I thank Him for letting me live healthily that day and go to sleep. I live each day at a time thankfully. This is the reward for being patient.

MK: I have one last question. Okamura-san [Ike Okamura] says that you are a good singer, but have you ever heard of a Kōloa bushi--a hole hole bushi?

BY: There is no hole hole bushi for Kōloa.

MK: Is there a hole hole bushi for Kaua'i?

BY: Yes there was one somewhere. There used to be a hole hole bushi for the [Kōloa] Senior Center.

MK: But for Kōloa . . .

BY: There isn't any for Kōloa. There isn't any, but at parties, although I'm not good, since everyone knows I like to sing, I am always called on to sing. Sometimes at the Senior center, when they ask me to sing, even though I'm not good, I sing because I enjoy it. I'm thankful for being able to sing.

END OF INTERVIEW

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Kaua'i Community**

**VOLUME I**

**Center for Oral History  
Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

**SEPTEMBER 1988**